

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

As a young person interested in politics, I am extremely dissappointed in the choices offered in terms of voter education on television. I receive the local newspaper and read it voraciously. I think of television and radio as other ways to round out my political knowledge. Unfortunately, I am mistaken. It is truly frustrating to try glean simple campaign news from all of the political ads and spin.

We often make disparing remarks aboiut the "average citizen" who is pathetically uninformed, but there is little effort to try to reach them. Where can a citizen turn to become truly informed on issues?

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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